



FEB 28 2005

Dear Tribal Leader:


The report that accompanies this letter was developed in accordance with the "U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Tribal Consultation Policy." The Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) produced the 2004 HHS Tribal Consultation Report in cooperation with each HHS Division as well as our staff in the HHS Regional Offices. The report documents the wide array of Tribal consultation activities that occurred in 2004.

A very significant accomplishment in 2004 was the revision of the Department's Tribal Consultation Policy. The project was undertaken through a Tribal Policy Revision Workgroup in response to Tribal leaders' comments at the Department's Tribal consultation sessions, written correspondence, Department visits to Indian Country, and observations that improvements were desirable for internal coordination and communication of policies impacting Indian Tribes. We believe that the revised policy provides clear guidance to HHS staff and Indian Tribes about how to plan, implement, and conduct consultation, as well as the protocols required to follow up on consultation recommendations. The President's 2005 budget proposes substantial support for Indian Tribes, thanks to effective consultation between HHS and Indian Tribes.

Very soon the Regions will begin the 2005 consultation process. I invite all of you to attend the session for your Region. The sessions are again being coordinated by the HHS Regional Directors and I have asked each of them to reach out to you as they develop the agenda for these sessions. It is our view that these sessions are a continuation of the dialogue that occurred last year. During that dialogue you identified many issues and priorities of concern to both Tribes and HHS. This year's sessions provide the opportunity for us to give you a status report on what has occurred since last year and to further discuss outstanding issues, as well as issues which may have recently emerged. You will receive a separate letter of invitation from the Secretary's Regional Director in the near future that will provide more details on the session in your respective Regions. I hope you will have the opportunity to attend.

I also want to thank everyone that participated in the HHS Budget Consultation session last May and to encourage you to participate in this year's session. The session this year will also be held in May. IGA staff will soon begin coordinating development of the agenda with Tribal leaders and Tribal organizations. I continue to invite you and your staff to participate in planning this process. If you would like to participate, you may contact me or my staff at (202) 690-6060.

Please do not hesitate to provide me your comments on the report. I value your participation in our meetings and our continued partnership.

  
Regina B. Schofield  
Director, Intergovernmental Affairs

Enclosure